



PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MUHTASIM JAWAD

The authentic royal feeling, till you hear the phone cameras clicking around you.

movie *Two States* any day!

After the overnight transit in Kolkata and a quick flight to Delhi, we were taken aback by the sights outside the Indira Gandhi International Airport. If you like flowers, be prepared with your cameras. Once we managed our SIM cards (note that you can't get any at the Kolkata airport), we were greeted by our tour guide Mr. Sonu, his thick moustache, and his trusted "Tourist Coaster"—the 10-seater vehicle which would carry us around in India. Delhi is a good place to stock up on snacks, convert your dollars to rupees, and grab hard-to-find gift items for your buddies, before you head towards other Indian cities.

We soon found ourselves on our way to Agra. The scorching heat could not beat our excitement—we were about to see the Taj Mahal. Suffice to say, the mausoleum of white marble was every bit as magnificent as we had expected. Our guide ran us through the history of this architectural wonder and we were amazed by the myths and stories surrounding it. Best place to take snaps? Your guide will direct you to them—do not ask for any help from ravenous freelance photographers who might sneak up on you. Be wary, though, you do not want to spend too much time clicking photos, since time runs like Aladdin in this palace of love. The sun was already setting and unfortunately, we had to skip the visit to the Red Fort (sad, I

you want to crank that feeling up a notch, you can even hire a royal horse carriage, complete with a band and palace guards, to take a spin around the place. Afterwards, we visited Sheesh Mahal—the palace of mirrors. I personally loved this legendary location, but perhaps the secret tunnels and archways (you might want to keep track of where you are going) of the Amer Fort appealed to me a bit more. Oh, please remember this: Jaipur has the best halal, non-vegetarian food out there, so don't forget to remind your guide to take you to the local restaurants.

Filled with shops, cafes, restaurants, fluffy dogs and friendly monkeys, you will be surprised at every turn in this mini-Darjeeling referred to as the Queen of Hill Stations.

Shi-shi-shimla, shi-shi-shivering! On the third day, we found relief from the heat. We were moving up the majestic green mountains with occasional snowcapped peaks visible too. The tour guide advised us to skip the Kufri hill station (since we had elderly family members with us), which meant we were missing out on the horseback riding in apple orchards. However, we

could experience the next best thing: Mall Road. We had to take two different lifts (you need to pay a toll for these) to get to the high altitude. Filled with shops, cafes, restaurants, fluffy dogs and friendly monkeys, you will be surprised at every turn in this mini-Darjeeling referred to as the Queen of Hill Stations. By the way,

apparently this is a pretty good place for shopping—all the female family members in our tour group will attest to that. When night fell, we rushed to a nearby store to



SIX STATES IN SEVEN DAYS

MUHAMMAD MUHTASIM JAWAD

Travelling to India back in March was a treat. The diverse weather conditions were breathtaking (my nose was blocked at times though) and it felt like I could experience Mother India's beauty to the fullest. I travelled with my family on a budget trip perfectly suited for bachelors: it was arduous and tiring, but still, I'd pick this journey throughout six states over the

know).

Jaipur, the jewel of Rajasthan, was on our checklist for the next day. Snooping around the City Palace was enthralling, but the number of foreigners you'll see crowding her may be too much to take. But hey, everyone wants to feel like royalty. If

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Being a petrolhead in Nagoya, Japan

Ehsanur Raza Ronny

"When I travel, I get lost looking at cars. Japan was thus perfect. One of the easiest ways to satiate your petrolhead cravings is the Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology in Nishi Ward, Nagoya. It is the smaller Toyota museum but it will still eat up hours of your time. You will get to see a fur covered van, race cars, hundreds of models, a robot that plays the violin in perfect harmony and socks that look like your favorite Toyota—less than 5% of what you can drool over. Speaking of drooling, they sell cookies shaped like Toyotas."

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